

**Submission  
No 193**

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Organisation:** Dharrivaa Elders Group

**Date Received:** 28 June 2024

# **NSW Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety Inquiry into Community Safety in Regional and Rural Communities**



*Aerial photo of Walgett - where the Ngamaay (Namoi River) joins the Baawan (Barwon-Darling River)*

**Submission from Dharriwaa Elders Group, Walgett  
28 June 2024**

## Introduction to Dharriwaa Elders Group (DEG)

The DEG is an Aboriginal cultural organisation which works to support Elders wellbeing, protect Aboriginal cultural heritage and knowledge and promote Aboriginal cultural values. The organisation works for community development, promoting relationships between Aboriginal Elders and other generations of the Walgett Aboriginal community.

Since 2016, DEG has been working in a community-led partnership with UNSW Sydney. The goals of this partnership, named Yuwaya Ngarra-li, are:

1. Greater Aboriginal community control and capacity
2. Increased numbers of Aboriginal young people in education, training and employment
3. Reduced numbers of Aboriginal people in contact with the criminal justice system
4. Improved social determinants of health and wellbeing amongst Aboriginal people
5. Increased sustainable management of water and Country
6. Redirection of funding towards strengths-based, holistic, community-led initiatives.

The following publications have been produced with UNSW and other colleagues that are relevant to this submission:

- [Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper: Lessons from Two River Pathway to Change Diversion Model \(2018–2023\)](#)
- [Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper: Dealing with Fines \(September 2023\)](#)
- [Yuwaya Ngarra-li Briefing Paper: Processes to enable community-led, systemic and collaborative change](#)
- ['Community-led diversion of Indigenous young people from the justice system: The role of government administrative data', \*International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice\*.](#)

The following DEG statements and published documents in relation to education, public health, homelessness are relevant to this submission:

- [Statement: Urgent action needed on systemic failure of leadership and outcomes at Walgett Community College High School, 21 March 2022](#)
- [Statement: High numbers of Covid 19 fines issued by NSW Police in Walgett, 5 May 2022](#)
- [Statement: DEG supports complaint to Law Enforcement Conduct Commission about NSW Police Response to the Covid 19 Public Health Emergency, 7 June 2023](#)
- [Statement: High levels of homelessness in Walgett, 13 July 2023](#)

The following submission describes the Dharriwaa Elders Group perspective of what community safety means.

DEG members have lived experience of institutional harms which have left them feeling unsafe eg the continuing and intergenerational impacts of the Stolen Generations policies, Deaths in Custody, high levels of incarceration of family members and children and young people, loss of access to waters and Country, degradation of Country and waterways, unsafe drinking water, heightened food insecurity and a long-term housing crisis, chronic financial hardship and poverty.

## Drivers of youth crime

The DEG can see that traditional criminal justice responses to issues of personal and public safety do not contribute to actual or perceived safety, and in fact make things worse. These processes

criminalise young people at earlier and earlier stages of their life, which has been a particular issue since public health offences were introduced during the COVID pandemic.

The DEG have long called for mechanisms that require NSW Police to work cooperatively with community-controlled organisations, taking the lead from community about initiatives that will achieve positive outcomes for community and not make things worse:

*"Instead of punishing us with fines that keep us in poverty, support us with our approach to build more wellbeing solutions that we know are really needed."* (Virginia Robinson, Walgett Elder, speaking with ABC News, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023)

A long-running concern of the DEG has been the high number of police officers in Walgett, as well as the response to problems faced by residents, such as homelessness and food insecurity, being led by the criminal justice system rather than other alternatives such as the health system or community organisations.

In March 2018, Yuwaya Ngarra-li organised a [Youth Justice Forum](#) in Walgett to address problems faced by Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system.

In the Walgett Youth Justice Forum in 2018, we heard from parents and community workers about the barriers experienced by children and young people that impacts on their wellbeing, for example, housing stress and over-crowding:

*'I see that as our teenagers grow up, the houses are full, they haven't got their own space. I see that there is a lot of need for our kids, I see that the kids are really crying out for help. There's not many services in town to get that help, and if there is services, they'll do it for one week, and then the next couple of weeks or a month, they don't worry about these kids, and then they've fallen back down again into that stage one.'* ([Trish Sharpley, Walgett Youth Justice Forum, 2018, p. 5](#))

Also at the Forum, we heard from young people about the experience of the police presence in their community during childhood:

*'Growing up Aboriginal means it is pretty much inevitable that you will come under police scrutiny at some time in your life, whether you are actually in trouble, assisting them with an inquiry or seeking support yourself...'* ([Delma Trindall, Walgett Youth Justice Forum, 2018, p. 6](#))

This led to the development of an [Action Plan for Children and Young People](#) through collaboration with stakeholders and agency representatives. We still wait for NSW government to commit to working with us to achieve the goals set out in the Action Plan:

1. Aboriginal organisations, government agencies, service providers, UNSW and other partners have made clear and funded commitments as part of a long-term plan agreed with the community to improve education, health, housing and employment outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people in Walgett.
2. Young people in Walgett report higher rates of belonging, safety, support, confidence and wellbeing.
3. Less than 10% of Aboriginal children and young people aged 10-17 from Walgett are appearing in the Children's Court (excluding appearances related to diversion).

4. Visible progress in the engagement of children and young people in study and work including through improvements in school attendance and outcomes, and new work opportunities for Aboriginal young people.

In Walgett, one of the biggest drivers of youth crime is surveillance by police officers. The NSW Law Enforcement Conduct Commission (LECC), in its review of the NSW Police's use of the Suspect Targeting Management Plan (STMP) in 2023, found that (page 9-10):

- Despite the policy changes the NSW Police Force implemented under STMP III, the second stage of the LECC Investigation found that little had changed in the way police used the STMP on young people.
- Police records lacked detail about the legal basis for some interactions, and we found some records that suggested interactions were, or may have been unlawful, because officers had acted beyond their statutory powers when interacting with young people on the STMP.
- The LECC reported being deeply concerned that despite references in some sections of the STMP policy that say officers must act within legislative limits (such as powers to search set out in LEPPRA), in practice, the way the STMP policy was applied to young people encouraged officers to act beyond their statutory powers.
- The LECC found that the application of the STMP resulted in confusion for officers between acting under law and acting under the policy.
- The use of STMP in this way undermined the statutory and common law frameworks designed to minimise the entry of young people into the criminal justice system.
- Under STMP III, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continued to be highly represented as targets, suggesting the continued discriminatory effect of the policy. There is national agreement on reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander over-representation in the criminal justice system, and the NSW Police Force has an Aboriginal Strategic Direction aimed at improving engagement and policing interactions with Aboriginal people.
- The proportion of Aboriginal young people in our investigation cohort over several years was extremely high, and the NSW Police Force did not appear to have any practical strategies for addressing this.
- The LECC also found strategies used by police that demonstrated a continued inattention to the specific characteristics of young people with complex needs, such as cognitive impairment or mental health related issues, and
- The LECC found incontrovertible evidence that some young people subjected to the STMP experienced patterns of policing interactions that unduly monitored them. The STMP policy was intrusive and disruptive to their day-to-day existence in a manner that was unreasonable.

The over-policing of young Aboriginal people in Walgett, both in their homes, on the streets and in the schools, combined with a lack of spaces and services for young people in Walgett - whether they are seeking shelter or recreational activities - means that they are likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system at a young age. This exacerbates the past and present effects of colonisation and intergenerational trauma, as stated by Walgett Elders in a 30 April 2024 workshop on community safety held earlier this year:

*'In my mind, I see my ancestors being chained, and I've seen them being hung and... shot. That's trauma to me and I hold it inside my heart, deep down, and every day I talk about it.'*

*'Trauma... has left bad consequences. There's a lot of alcohol, a lot of drugs, a lot of time on mobile phones... It creates a lot of tension. A lot of fear, a lot of fright, a lot of insecurity.'*

*'The only thing they have for people that's in need is the refuge. But you've got to have a parent with you, they cannot put you in there as a child. There's nowhere at all in Walgett for a child to have a good night's sleep, a good dinner that night, a good breakfast in the morning, a good shower and go do whatever he wants for the rest of the day.'*

In Walgett, police are funded at a higher level than other 'services', including alcohol and other drug (AOD), reintegration, mental health and housing services. This high level of funding produces more contact with the criminal justice system, with the NSW Treasury in its [2023-24 NSW Indigenous Expenditure Report](#) (p. 46) stating

*'Police officers are typically the first point of interaction a person has with the criminal justice system. These interactions and the level of discretion available to police officers are key factors that influence downstream expenditure and demand across the criminal justice system.'*

Prior contact with the criminal justice system is a major driver of 'youth crime'. Many offences which result in court appearances for young people include breach of bail conditions, with [Crégut, Van der Veen and McNamara \(2021, p. 16\)](#) stating that 'the model of addressing 'offending behaviour' via conditions, surveillance and sanctions for breach, means that the youth justice system is actually generating a significant proportion of juvenile 'offences' ([Goldson et al., 2020](#)) and exacerbating the harmful impacts of criminalisation on young children.'

We do not know a great deal about the community's priorities around what safety is because the dominant narratives currently frame community safety as law-and-order "problem" that can only be solved by police. The justification for the heavy police presence often used, is that they improve community safety but we struggle to see those outcomes and the lived experience is that they have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of Aboriginal community members. In the recent DEG workshop where we discussed community safety, Elders stated that the presence of police and child welfare services made them feel unsafe, in the context of past and present behaviour:

*'My biggest fear is the coppers.'*

*'I blame police for a lot of fear in this community. You've only for to see a police car in the street... I think, 'My God, you know, I'll just go slow or I won't do this.' Because everywhere in the community: patrol cars, police cars everywhere.'*

*'Black people [were] kept on the move because they didn't stop in one place because they were frightened that their kids were gonna be taken away. And that was a big safety thing.'*

*'I'm really serious about police. The police cause a lot of problems in this town. Whether they like it or not, they do. I used to have a lot of respect for police. Not now. Not now. Not when I see how they behave in this town. And the things they've done to make other people unhappy, that make those other people unsafe people.'*

In terms of what does make community feel safe, Elders spoke in this workshop about the good memories they had of being raised safe in their families:

*'The old people that we grew up with always kept us safe... we were taught by the old people how to take care when you're out in the bush: snakes, logs, insects, fires, all those sorts of things... We were taught the right way.'*

*'There was always someone in our group watching over each other.'*

*'The caring, the love, the respect for their children. It was basically their child rearing practices that made us feel safe.'*

*'The older people looked after the young ones, so the new generation would come on.'*

The Aboriginal community in Walgett, via various community committees eg the School Reference Groups and documented in DEG statements, ministerial letters and Yuwaya Ngarrali briefing papers has consistently stated what will make our town safer. Governments not supporting community-led solutions are failing in their duty by creating unsafe communities.

## Two River Pathway to Change

Yuwaya Ngarrali has been building its youth diversion demonstration model, named by DEG's Virginia Robinson as *Bulaarr Bagay Warruwi Burranba-li-gu* (Gamilaraay) "Two River Pathway to Change". This model and other views of the DEG Elders have informed this submission on community safety in Walgett. One of the key findings from our implementation of the model has been that children and young people in Walgett are over-policed and underserved.

Through implementing the Two River Pathway to Change model, we have learnt a significant amount about the experiences and needs of the cohort of Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system in Walgett, the significant stressors and punitive responses they experience and lack of access to safe, holistic and trauma-informed support. In summary:

All children and young people who came to the attention of DEG, including through COVID responses, had had contact with police. This occurred when children and young people are spending time in public spaces, when police are regularly called to the school or doing bail checks, or when young people are in crisis and families have nowhere else to turn.

Every young person over 12 years old that engaged with DEG had appeared in the Children' Court at the Walgett Local Court. This resonates with our analysis of BOCSAR data showing that many first and minor offences (public order offences, property damage and theft) are being finalised in the Walgett Children's Court rather than receiving a diversion from police.

This cohort of children and young people experience complex mental health issues. They face a large amount of stress, often from the compounding factors of intergenerational trauma, over-crowded housing, being treated punitively and with suspicion in public spaces and institutions (including schools) and lack of access to appropriate mental health and community services and support. Self-harm and self-medicating with 'yarndi' (cannabis) to deal with stress is common. Only one young person in the cohort had accessed mental health care resulting in a diagnosis and treatment.

Children and young people are in urgent and critical need of mental health and wellbeing supports of all kinds. This includes long-term counselling and support around daily stressors in their lives, interpersonal relationships with friends and family, more serious complex trauma related illnesses, and undiagnosed complex mental health issues. New resources and services are needed for this cohort, and young people need assistance to access existing services. These health pathways need to be set up formally through a new approach.

Many young people are excluded from education through the use of long and successive suspensions (multiple suspensions for 20 days at a time in succession is common), flawed return to school processes at the high school and restricted access at the primary school (there is a class that only allows for children to attend school from 9am-11am each day with children as young as 10 years old in the class).

From 2020 to 2022, DEG undertook wellbeing checks with young people - including as part of its crisis response during COVID—building trust and connection and getting to know the support needs of young people as well as dropping off food vouchers, water, activity supplies, PPE, helping young

people under youth justice supervision manage their reporting requirements and participation in YJC, and assisting with school packs and access to technology. In 2022, around nine wellbeing checks were completed per month and often acted as early intervention for emerging issues. This model of outreach support was very effective, but is not the approach taken by other services in Walgett or the region with responsibilities for children and young people in Walgett.

These insights reinforce a core aspect of the Bulaarr Bagay Warruwi Burranba-li-gu model - that addressing the criminalisation of young people cannot just focus on changes to the justice system; it must focus on broader conditions for children and young people's wellbeing. While policing practice must change, there are many other areas that require significant shifts to support children and young people including trauma-informed education, access to flexible learning and education, access to appropriate trauma-informed mental health care, and youth services and support that build trusting relationships and recognise the inherent protective factors of family, Community, ACCOs and Culture.

## How a whole of government approach can reduce the drivers and root causes of youth crime in regional and rural NSW

As discussed above, the drivers and root causes of youth crime in regional and rural NSW include intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation, lack of services (not to mention culturally appropriate services), and a heavy police presence.

What is required are holistic responses, including the principles from the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The National Agreement is built around four Priority Reforms:

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making
2. Building the community-controlled sector
3. Transforming government organisations
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level

NSW also has a fifth Priority Reform: Economic prosperity, business growth and employment.

A new NSW Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement to strengthen relationships between government and Aboriginal organisations was signed on 12 February 2024. The NSW Partnership Agreement builds on the National Partnership Agreement, signed in March 2020, and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, signed in July 2020. It acknowledges the landscape and dynamics specific to NSW and provides guidance on what partnership looks like in the NSW context.

The Agreement highlights the NSW Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and achieving tangible outcomes for Aboriginal communities. It demonstrates the importance of embedding the principles of partnership in NSW.

The Closing the Gap priorities include Building the Community-Controlled Sector (Priority Reform Two), with a target to 'Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.' Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) such as DEG need to be properly funded to deliver holistic solutions in Walgett.

The NSW Government agreed earlier in 2024 that it would adopt, in line with the Commonwealth Government's recommendations, a whole-of-government approach to achieving the targets described in the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.



**This requires that issues of safety in regional and rural areas, including Walgett, are responded to not just by NSW Police and the Department of Communities and Justice, but primarily by NSW Health and the Department of Education alongside ACCOs, with ACCOs being given decision making power within their own communities.**

One of the ways in which community-led mechanisms can be empowered is through the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (CAPO), a co-signatory on the NSW Closing the Gap agreement. Cr Anne Dennis, when she was Co-Chair of CAPO NSW, stated that

*'This necessary shift in power [to communities] will be crucial in ensuring that decision making processes are shared with and led by community.'* ([New partnership agreement to close the gap in NSW](#), NSW Government, 12 February 2024)

**Our peak bodies need the resourcing to be run effectively and efficiently and to regularly represent our policy solutions. We need to be given transparent opportunities to review and ground-truth information being discussed by Secretary groupings for decisions and policies affecting Walgett.**

What a whole-of-government approach in addressing community safety in Walgett could look like is a scenario that we are building whereby NSW Health and the Department of Communities and Justice support a new Youth Wellbeing Collaboration Service. In 2023 and 2024, Walgett Aboriginal Medical Service (WAMS), Aboriginal Legal Service (ALS) NSW/ACT, and the DEG embarked on a collaboration to design and implement a Walgett Wellbeing Service and accommodation for children and young people. This work continues the historical practice of collaborating to set up new services in response to the Walgett Aboriginal community's needs, and is a continuation of the aforementioned *Bulaarr Bagay Warruwi Burranba-li-gu* (Gamilaraay) "Two River Pathway to Change".

## Wraparound and diversionary services available for youth and families

Currently in Walgett, police are used as the response to all issues of public safety despite the town's ACCOs being able to provide appropriate services and diversion from the criminal justice system if they are funded and resourced properly. Throughout regional and rural NSW, ACCOs are the enduring service providers on the ground in communities. The Closing the Gap Priority Reforms recognise this, and by enacting these Reforms ACCOs can be supported and enabled to build the responses that police are not able to provide.

We have seen [time and time again that local ACCOs](#), in their respective communities, provide services and support that best suited to divert youth from crime. Again, if the NSW Government worked in partnership with Aboriginal people and ACCOs to sustainably support ACCO initiatives like these it would realise a commitment that it has made through the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

## Staffing levels and workforce issues

The workforce that needs to be built in Walgett should provide social and emotional, including therapeutic, responses as an alternative to punitive police responses. We offer advice regarding the actions we need the NSW Government to implement in order to break the barriers and challenges to Walgett recruitment.

## **Staff Housing**

This new wellbeing workforce will need new staff housing. There are no private rentals available in Walgett and a shortage of staff housing for many agencies and ACCOs. Savings could be made by combining the management of staff housing for all NSW agencies under the one entity. For example teacher and police housing have recently been combined under the management of Housing Services in the Land and Housing Corporation NSW and could be joined by NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Health, NSW DCJ, TAFE, NSW Justice, NSW Youth Justice and other NSW agencies. **We request that unused houses managed by this entity are leased to Walgett ACCOs. We also request a shared equity scheme like that offered to individuals by the NSW Government, for ACCOs, for direct investment in ACCO staff housing and for Council to set aside land for the purposes of staff housing.** Workers choosing to move to Walgett usually have to maintain housing in their primary residential address. We should not expect our workforce to be burdened by maintaining two residences, yet this is what they need to do to maintain secure housing for their families. This is another reason why people with needed skills moving to work in Walgett need subsidised housing. Our local Walgett workforce also need housing assistance as the shortage of housing in Walgett is extreme and the lack of housing is contributing to the brain drain to larger centres.

## **The false story of Walgett must be countered**

Politicians using Walgett as clickbait to attract votes by fanning scare/ fear narratives has resulted in Walgett ACCOs and other businesses finding it harder to recruit to Walgett. We fear communities experiencing similar systemic challenges also face this stigma. Well-focussed, sustained mainstream media education campaigns to counter these narratives and attract people to work in Walgett, are required.

## **Local employment and community development initiatives need support**

With our philanthropic supporters and our Yuwaya Ngarrali partners at UNSW, DEG has created new jobs in Walgett for new services that we believe meet community needs. The ACCOs of Walgett have identified services that would achieve NSW and Commonwealth policy outcomes e.g. Closing the Gap IF they were resourced to develop and implement these new services. We would like the opportunity to present these proposals to a supportive government which proactively seeks to support the growth of jobs and new industries in Walgett. **Walgett ACCOs require flexible funds to engage and support its workforce and grow local skills.** DEG requires financial support, and local government commitment, with legislation and guidelines which enable its business incubation. This is critical to develop new industries for the region to achieve community-wide wellbeing, and consequent community safety stemming from secure local jobs. Business incubation opportunities and infrastructure initiatives to support community wellbeing include building a local circular waste economy, food and water security, increased wellbeing supports, energy security, access to affordable housing and supported accommodation for all residents and cohorts.

## **Recognition of the extra supports required when growing a local Aboriginal workforce**

Government action to provide the extra supports required when growing a local Aboriginal workforce in Walgett is urgently needed. DEG has found that the elements of successful service approaches include building teams with key staff who have: 1. lived experience of being impacted by systems of concern such as child welfare systems and police 2. counselling skills or similar 3. deep knowledge of the ACCO sector and workforces, and 4. deep knowledge of the community they are working in.

Trauma-informed, culturally led and therapeutic supports are essential for growing and keeping local Walgett Aboriginal people in the jobs we seek to fill. DEG has developed the concept of “pairing” local Aboriginal staff with their deep knowledge of community and conditions, with invited professionals.

The high degree of chronic disease and grief and loss in our community means that ideally there are two staff for every one role to cover staff absences.

## Recidivism rates

Accounting for population size, children and young people in regional and remote areas are more likely to be proceeded against by police than those in metropolitan areas. Young people in the Far West and Orana region of NSW are the most likely to be proceeded against by police, with a rate of 6,200.4 per 100,000 population proceeded to court and 2,980.6 per 100,000 population proceeded by diversion (excluding warnings) in 2023.

Children and young people who are proceeded to court, rather than receiving a diversionary response, are more likely to reoffend.

The vast majority of young people in custody in NSW are on remand as opposed to sentenced. At the end of the March quarter of 2024, 223 children and young people were in youth custody, of whom 75.8% were on remand and 66.4% were Aboriginal.

The systemic criminalisation of young people, who are disproportionately Aboriginal, starts a cycle of recidivism, which continues into adulthood.

*‘Studies have revealed that the younger a child is when they encounter the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to reoffend. Raising the age of criminal responsibility could reduce recidivism rates and create an opportunity to identify children at risk and engage with appropriate early intervention services.’ (NSW Treasury, 2024, p. 55)*

The result of this cycle of recidivism is reduced safety and wellbeing for the individuals involved in the criminal justice system and for their family and community when they are released.

*‘The high rates of First Nations imprisonment also limit access to Country and kin, culturally appropriate healthcare, education, employment opportunities, mental health care and disability services. This can compound socio-economic disadvantage with impacts for overall individual and community outcomes.’ (NSW Treasury, 2024, p. 5)*

*‘Now, it's courts, police, jail, bail, bothers the life out of people. And that's very unsafe, even to live with someone that's involved in courts and the justice system, because you know that they're not happy about what they've done wrong, to make themselves unhappy, and to make you feel unsafe.’ (DEG Elder, community safety workshop, 2024)*

Traditional criminal justice approaches are criminalising and are not reducing contact with the criminal justice system, or producing the wellbeing outcomes which see our young people thriving in community. DEG strongly supports investment in community-led wellbeing solutions to reduce criminalisation, incarceration and recidivism. Priority should also be given to reforms including raising the age of criminal responsibility which will enable young people to access wellbeing services

as early as possible and resourcing appropriate services and support for children and young people to prevent their involvement in the criminal justice system in the first place.

## Range of functions being performed by NSW police officers

In Walgett we've witnessed the over-reliance on police to lead emergency responses and they are the first responders to mental health and other family and community crises in the community. As outlined in this submission, this over-reliance on police is experienced as harmful at a community-level. The vulnerabilities of our community are made worse through police-led responses to social needs such as lack of housing, lack of drug and alcohol services and supports, lack of early intervention and prevention services. The continued use of police as the default response to a community that needs a wellbeing response is creating more harm and makes it more difficult for us to work with police constructively where they are required to respond in the community. The NSW Government needs to reverse through policy and law reform the over-reliance on police by resourcing community first responders to achieve community care outcomes.

In response to the use of police fines as a public health measure, [DEG Elder Virginia Robinson](#) stated in 2023:

*'We have witnessed first-hand the damage of a police-led response to a public health crisis and we are worse off.*

*I know what this is doing to our young people and their future life-prospects.*

*We look to the new NSW Government to do the right thing and stop the way fines are used punitively on communities. Instead of punishing us with fines that keep us in poverty, support us with our approach to build more wellbeing solutions that we know are really needed.'*

## Any other related matter

DEG Elders have identified the need for education for all of community around safe uses of social media and being on-line. We see that technology and the internet is important for accessing education, training, employment, our friends, family, peers and the world. However in the absence of a culturally-specific campaign for young people and families around safe use of new technologies, they are being used to amplify community trauma and distress. In their words:

*'Facebook, I find, is a big problem in this community. I have a grandson who was almost killed with a bottle in a shop here, through someone texting about a girl. And it happens a lot on Facebook with young people in this town. We never had those things when we were young, the technology, to be upset about something or someone upsetting you, or, you know, spreading rumors through Facebook, through Twitter, TikTok, all that...'* (DEG Elder, community safety workshop, 2024)